



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

FAST FACTS

Family Planning

Key Facts

- **USAID:** The acknowledged leader in implementing the U.S. global population program and in leveraging support from other donors
- **54:** Number of developing countries receiving USAID family planning assistance
- **10% to more than 40%:** Growth in use of modern family planning since USAID began providing family planning services in 1965
- **From six to four:** Decline in average number of children per family between 1986 and 2008 in the 34 countries with the largest USAID-sponsored family planning programs
- **25 million:** Approximate number of women USAID's voluntary family planning and reproductive health programs serve each year
- **Brazil, Mexico, Korea, Thailand:** Former recipients of family planning assistance. Stabilized population growth helped strengthen these U.S. trading partners; today they are donors
- **Jamaica and Indonesia:** Strategically important countries that have graduated from USAID family planning assistance

Global Importance of Family Planning

Saves lives of mothers and children. Births that are too close together, too early, or too late in a woman's life decrease both the mother's and the infant's chances of survival. By helping women space births at least three years apart, bear children during their healthiest years, and avoid unplanned pregnancies, family planning could prevent one in three of maternal and child deaths in the developing world.

Reduces abortion rates. Unintended pregnancy can result in abortion. Each year, an estimated 42 million abortions take place in the world. Wider availability of family planning programs could prevent many of these abortions.

Important in fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly mother-to-child HIV transmission. Family planning allows HIV-positive women to space births for optimal health and contributes to programs providing voluntary counseling and testing and prevention of mother-to-child transmission services. Family planning services also help reduce stigma, improve referral networks for HIV-related services, and prevent unintended pregnancy, HIV infection, and other sexually transmitted infections.

Improves couple relationships and family cohesiveness. Studies show freedom from worry of unplanned pregnancy improves partner relations and family well-being because the mother has more time to nurture her family.

Provides options and opportunities. Birth spacing gives women greater economic opportunities. As family income rises, they spend more money on the education and nutrition of their children, continuing the cycle of opportunity.

Contributes to community development. Countries in the developing world that have invested in health and education and have provided women access to family planning programs have experienced faster economic growth than those that have not.

Reduces pressures on environment and natural resources. Family planning not only has an impact on the well-being of families, but also contributes to better management and conservation of natural resources and eases population pressures on local ecosystems.

Women want it. Recent surveys show desired family size is smaller than actual size in almost every country in the developing world, regardless of religion and culture. More than 215 million women in the world would like to postpone or stop having children but are not using modern contraception.

The need is still great, especially in Africa and for the poorest of the poor. For the more than 1 billion people living on less than US\$1 per day, health services and modern medicines, including modern methods of contraception, are still out of reach.

USAID Programs

USAID provides high-quality, voluntary family planning services that emphasize choice among a wide mix of contraceptives, improved quality of care, and client-centered services. Program areas include:

- **Service delivery**, including training for physicians, paramedics, and field workers; applied research; technical assistance in the design and improvement of services; and improvements in quality of care
- **Public education** to increase the awareness, acceptability, and use of contraceptives
- **Provision, maintenance, distribution, and marketing** of contraceptive commodities and supplies
- **Research and development** in contraceptive technology and operations research to test the effectiveness of programs and approaches
- Help to host countries in **developing policies** governing the availability and provision of – and the demand for – family planning services, and policy support for analysis of the impact of rapid population growth on other development sectors, such as food, health, and energy

USAID also assumes leadership in exploring issues that affect family planning and women's health. These include:

- **Integrating family planning and HIV/AIDS programs** to find synergies that add benefits for clients and improve the cost-effectiveness of integrated programming
- **Repositioning family planning** to increase recognition of family planning's role in the health and development of nations in sub-Saharan Africa while strengthening services
- **Contraceptive security**, which exists when every person is able to choose, obtain, and use quality contraceptives and condoms for family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention

Other efforts center on eradicating the harmful traditional practice of female genital cutting; prevention and repair of obstetric fistula; gender issues, including male involvement in family planning, gender violence, and too-early marriage; the Maximizing Access and Quality Initiative to improve client care and provider behavior and responsiveness; post-abortion care to provide lifesaving care and contraceptive information to women who have had medical emergencies due to spontaneous or induced abortions; poverty and health equity; refugee reproductive health; and addressing the specific reproductive health needs of youth.

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